

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7324
AMEMBASSY BONN
INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 USBERLIN 1735

FOLLOWING MESSAGE IS FROM AMBASSADOR STOESSEL

E O 11652: GDS
TAGS: PARM PINT UR XJ
SUBJ: ABRASIMOV ON DISARMAMENT, AFRICA AND HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS

REF: 77 USBER 2950

SUMMARY: DURING MY JULY 21 LUNCHEON WITH ABRASIMOV, SOVIET
AMBASSADOR TO THE GDR, HE MADE SIGNIFICANT COMMENTS
ON DISARMAMENT ISSUES, FOREIGN PRESENCE IN AFRICA, AND
HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE SOVIET UNION. END SUMMARY.

1. AT JULY 21 LUNCHEON, ABRASIMOV, SOVIET
AMBASSADOR TO GDR, RENEWED HIS PRACTICE CITED REFTEL OF
PRESENTING SOVIET VIEWS ON NON-BERLIN TOPICS AT SOME
LENGTH DURING OUR EXCHANGES. AMONG THE MATTERS COVERED,
ABRASIMOV'S COMMENTS ON DISARMAMENT, OUTSIDE INVOLVEMENT
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IN AFRICAN PROBLEMS, AND "HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS" (I.E.,
SOVIET DISSIDENTS) WERE NOTEWORTHY.

2. ABRASIMOV LED OFF POST-LUNCHEON DISCUSSION BY ASSERTING
THAT IN THE SEVEN MONTHS SINCE OUR LAST MEETING, SOVIET
UNION HAD DONE EVERYTHING POSSIBLE IN EUROPE AND THROUGHOUT
THE WORLD TO PROMOTE DETENTE AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE. HE

CLAIMED THAT IF THOSE ENGAGED IN DIALOGUES WITH THE SOVIETS IN SALT OR IN BROADER DISARMAMENT FORA WERE PREPARED TO BE RESPONSIVE OR TO MAKE EQUALLY STRENUOUS EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS, RESULTS BENEFICAL TO AMERICAN AND SOVIET PEOPLES WOULD HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED LONG BEFORE NOW.

3. ABRASIMOV CONTINUED, HOWEVER, THAT "FORCES OF REALISM" IN US WHICH WISHED TO ACHIEVE PEACE WERE CONFRONTED BY SINISTER FORCES RANGED AROUND "THE MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX." THESE LATTER FORCES CONTINUED TO "PUMP UP THE SOVIET THREAT," AT LEAST PARTLY AS A MEANS OF MAINTAINING ECONOMIC PROSPERITY FOR FIRMS PRODUCING WEAPONS AND SERVICING THE US MILITARY. ABRASIMOV NOTED THAT NO SOVIET SOLDIER HAD EVER BEEN PRESENT ON US TERRITORY, CONTRASTING THIS TO ALLEGED US INTERVENTION AGAINST "THE YOUNG SOVIET REPUBLIC."

4. I REPLIED THAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AND THE CURRENT ADMINISTRATION WERE ALSO DESIROUS OF FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND NOTED THE PRESIDENT'S REPLY TO THE FIRST QUESTION AT HIS JULY 20 NEWS CONFERENCE IN THIS CONNECTION. IT WAS HARDLY SURPRISING THAT THERE WERE CERTAIN PROBLEMS IN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE US AND THE SOVIET UNION: OUR TWO COUNTRIES HAD DIFFERENT SYSTEMS AND OFTEN LOOKED AT THINGS IN DIFFERENT WAYS. IN CERTAIN RESPECTS WE WERE COMPETITIVE. BUT THE TWO SIDES ALSO HAD CERTAIN COMMON INTERESTS; ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT OF THESE WAS PREVENTING WAR. CONFIDENTIAL

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5. IT WAS TRUE THAT THERE WAS GENUINE CONCERN IN THE US WITH REGARD TO SOVIET POWER; THIS CONCERN WAS NOT RPT NOT INSPRIED BY THE MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX. RATHER IT WAS A GENERAL FEELING AND WAS BASED ON FACTS SUCH AS THE THREE-TO-ONE ADVANTAGE WHICH WARSAW PACT COUNTRIES POSSESSED IN TANKS IN CENTRAL EUROPE OVER THE NATO ALLIANCE. THERE WAS ALSO UNDERSTANDABLE CONCERN AMONG OUR ALLIES OVER NEW WEAPONS SUCH AS THE SS-20 WHICH THE SOVIET SIDE AS INTRODUCING IN THE EUROPEAN THEATER. THE US BELIEVED THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO MAINTAIN A BALANCE OF STRENGTH IN EUROPE; US PROPOSALS IN THE MBFR TALKS IN VIENNA WERE INTENDED TO ACHIEVE THIS END.

6. I ADDED THAT I UNDERSTOOD THE SOVIET UNION HAD RECENTLY MADE A NEW PROPOSAL IN VIENNA; I WAS CERTAIN THAT THE US GOVERNMENT WOULD EXAMINE THIS PROPOSAL CAREFULLY. IT WAS TO BE HOPED THAT THE DISCUSSIONS COULD BE CARRIED FORWARD TOWARDS A CONCLUSION WHICH WOULD EMBRACE PARITY BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES AND A COMMON CEILING ON TROOPS STATIONED IN CENTRAL EUROPE. I EXPRESSED HOPE FOR POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS ALONG THESE LINES.

7. I SAID THAT RECENT SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA ALSO AROUSED CONCERN IN THE US AND BURDENED OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. ABRASIMOV PROFESSED SURPRISE AT THIS, SAYING THAT NOT ONE SOVIET SOLDIER IS PRESENT IN AFRICA; BUT THE SOVIET UNION HAD HELPED AND WOULD CONTINUE TO HELP THOSE AFRICAN COUNTRIES WHICH WERE THREATENED BY OUTSIDE FORCES WHILE PURSUING A COURSE OF "INDEPENDENT EXISTENCE".

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8. ABRASIMOV NOTED THAT THE SOVIET UNION HAD FORMERLY GRANTED BOTH MILITARY AND ECONOMIC AID TO SOMALIA. HOWEVER, WHEN SOMALIA ATTACKED ETHIOPIA, THIS AID WAS TERMINATED AND THE SOVIET UNION BEGAN AIDING ETHIOPIA AS A VICTIM OF AGGRESSION. SHOULD THE SITUATION BE REVERSED, ABRASIMOV ADDED, THE SOVIET UNION WOULD HELP SOMALIA IF REQUESTED.

9. ABRASIMOV SAID THAT THE SOVIETS DID NOT RPT NOT NEED RAW MATERIALS FROM AFRICA SUCH AS COOPER FROM ZAIRE SINCE THE SOVIETS HAD AN ABUNDANCE OF NATURAL RESOURCES. ABRASIMOV CONTINUED THAT SOVIET WEAPONS HAD NOT RPT NOT BEEN SENT TO ZAIRE DURING RECENT TENSIONS THERE, CONTRASTING THIS WITH WHAT HE CALLED FRENCH-BELGIAN-AMERICAN PRESENCE THERE. HE ADDED THAT THIS PRESENCE CAME ABOUT NOT BECAUSE THE THREE WESTERN COUNTRIES LIKED "MOBUTU'S ROTTEN GOVERNMENT" BUT RATHER BECAUSE A LARGE AMOUNT OF

WESTERN CAPITAL HAD BEEN INVESTED IN ZAIRE.

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10. I REPLIED THAT IT WAS NATURALLY OF CONCERN TO THE US AND OTHER WESTERN POWERS WHEN MASSIVE QUANTITIES OF ARMS WERE INTRODUCED INTO AREAS IN AFRICA OR ELSEWHERE WHERE EXISTING TENSIONS WERE HIGH. IT WAS DISTRESSING TO NOTE THAT SOVIET ARMS HAD BEEN MADE AVAILABLE BOTH TO SOMALIA AND ETHIOPIA. I TOOK EXCEPTION TO ABRASIMOV'S CHARACTERIZATION OF THE US INVOLVEMENT IN THE RECENT INVASION OF ZAIRE'S SHABA PROVINCE, NOTING THAT WE HAD NOT SENT COMBAT TROOPS BUT RATHER PROVIDED LOGISTICAL SUPPORT TO AN EFFORT TO SAVE LIVES BY EVACUATING FOREIGN NATIONALS FROM A COMBAT AREA. THE US HAD NO DESIRE TO MAINTAIN A CONTINUING MILITARY PRESENCE IN AFRICA. I CONTRASTED THIS TO SOVIET SUPPORT OF A LARGE-SCALE CUBAN PRESENCE WHICH DID NOT COINCIDE WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF LETTING AFRICANS RESOLVE THEIR OWN PROBLEMS WITHOUT OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE. ABRASIMOV DID NOT RESPOND ON THE CUBAN PRESENCE.

11. ON HUMAN RIGHTS, I NOTED THAT THERE WAS GREAT PUBLIC CONCERN IN THE US ABOUT TREATMENT OF DISSIDENTS IN THE SOVIET UNION. MANY AMERICANS FELT THAT WHAT HAD OCCURRED IN RECENT TRIALS WAS NOT IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE OBLIGATIONS THE USSR HAD UNDERTAKEN IN THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT. THIS FEELING NATURALLY LED TO CRITICISM OF THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT. ABRASIMOV REJOINED THAT THE SOVIET PEOPLE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY THE PRESENT ADMINISTRATION WISHED TO REVERT TO THE "BAD DAYS OF THE COLD WAR". TRIALS OF THE SORT WHICH HAD RECENTLY BEEN CONCLUDED HAD TAKEN PLACE IN THE PST AND WOULD RECUR WHENEVER "SPIES AND TRAITORS" IN THE USSR COLLECTED INTELLIGENCE AGAINST OUR STATE. GIVEN THE PRINCIPLE OF NON-INTERFERENCE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF ANOTHER STATE, IT WAS IMPERMISSIBLE FOR THE US TO INVOLVE ITSELF DIRECTLY IN SUCH MATTERS. IN PARALLEL FASHION, THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT WAS NOT INTERFERING

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WITH PROBLEMS IN THE US INVOLVING BLACKS OR INDIANS. ABRASIMOV ADDED THAT HE DID NOT RPT NOT NEED TO QUOTE AMBASSADOR ANDREW YOUNG TO POINT OUT HOW MANY AMERICANS SUFFERED PERSECUTION. "IT WAS WELL KNOWN THAT MANY CONGRESSMEN SUPPORTED YOUNG." OF COURSE, NOW THAT PRESIDENT CARTER HAD "DISCIPLINED" AMBASSADOR YOUNG, YOUNG SAID HE WOULD NEVER SPEAK AGAIN IN THE SAME VEIN. AFTER SUCH ACTION,

IT WAS HARD TO LISTEN TO AMERICAN PROFESSIONS OF CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS WITHOUT SMILING. THE US HAD "MORE THAN ENOUGH" POLITICAL PRISONERS AND IF THE SOVIETS DEALT WITH "THREE OR FIVE DISSIDENTS" IN ORDER TO DEFEND LAW AND ORDER, THIS WAS AN INTERNAL MATTER. THE US SHOULD NOT SEEK TO DISTRACT ATTENTION FROM ITS OWN PROBLEMS BY "PLAYING UP" SUCH MATTERS.

12. I COUNTERED APPROPRIATELY, NOTING THAT THE US DID NOT ENDEAVOR TO HIDE ITS INTERNAL PROBLEMS OR STIFLE DOMESTIC DISSENT. NOR DID WE HAVE ANY DESIRE TO INTERFERE IN INTERNAL SOVIET AFFAIRS. BUT BOTH THE US AND THE USSR HAD SIGNED THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT WHICH COMMITTED ITS SIGNATORIES TO ALLOWING EMIGRATION, FREE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLES AND FREE EXPRESSION OF IDEAS. THE RECENT TRIALS IN THE SOVIET UNION WENT DIRECTLY AGAINST THESE PRINCIPLES. IT WAS HARDLY SURPRISING THAT MANY AMERICANS FOUND THIS DISTASTEFUL AND OPENLY SAID SO. NEVERTHELESS, THE U.S. STILL CONSIDERED IT IMPORTANT TO HAVE AS GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION AS POSSIBLE. THEREFORE, WE ARE CONTINUING WITH EFFORTS TO NEGOTIATE IN GOOD FAITH FOR A SALT AGREEMENT AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE.

13. ABRASIMOV CONCLUDED WITH AN ASSERTION THAT GOOD SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS WERE JUST AS ESSENTIAL TO THE US AS TO THE SOVIETS AND THAT THE SOVIET UNION WOULD ALWAYS RESPOND FAVORABLY TO "GOOD AND KIND ACTIONS."GEORGE

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